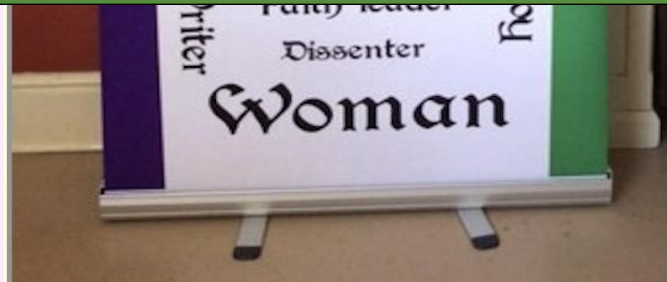
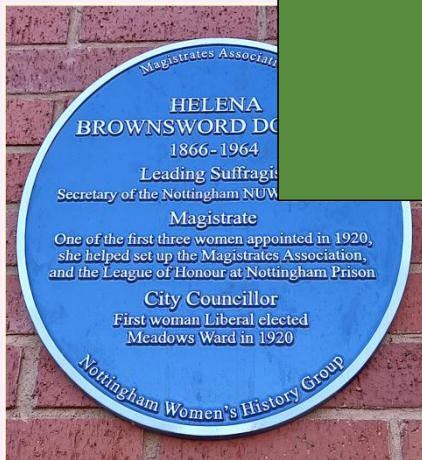




NOTTINGHAM WOMEN'S HISTORY GROUP NEWSLETTER ISSUE 21 AUTUMN 2026



Magistrates Association

1920-2020
100 Years of Women Magistrates

After the passing of the Sex Disqualification Removal Act on 23rd December 1919 women were able to be Magistrates

On 20th July 1920 the first women appointed in Nottingham sitting at the Guildhall in Burton Street were

Helena Brownsword Dowson 1866-1964
Mary Ball 1866-1946
Caroline Harper 1863-1937

Nottingham Women's History Group



Chair's Welcome

Well, here we are, heading into autumn and memories of that beautiful but rather alarming summer are slowly receding, although the effects will continue to be felt for a long time.

Firstly, we're thrilled to welcome new members on to the Committee – Jean Brennan, and Katharine Ramshaw. It's so good to have new energy, ideas and enthusiasm, not to mention the skills, links and contacts they have brought with them. Watch this space!

We offered two walks over the summer, Miriam's *Remarkable Women*, and Karen's *Mary Bailey and Susannah Wright*. Both were popular although the extreme weather no doubt affected turnout. Demand for our talks was high, from groups as diverse as the WI, the U3A, local history groups, a Rainbows' group, a Golf Club, and the by now traditional suffragette school lesson! We also have talks booked well in to 2027 and it seems our reputation continues to spread, which is good news for us.

We had two very successful collaborations: one with Bromley House Library for International Women's Day, when we did a series of talks over the day and had a stall in their beautiful Neville Hoskins Reading Room. The other collaboration was with the last ever Lowdham Book Festival on 20th June, a sad occasion but it was a glorious farewell for such an important Nottinghamshire cultural institution.

Another promising collaboration will be with Nottingham Women's Centre who invited us to support their bid for HLF funding to make much needed improvements to their building which they have recently bought. Needless to say, we were only too happy to be involved.

In other news, Linzi is doing an amazing job adding women to Wikipedia as part of the Women in Red project. There's still a long way to go to redress the balance but there are now more links to and about women than

there were before, and there will be a collaborative event with Women in Red next year.

Our Rose Fyleman plaque appeal was launched in the summer with the aim of attaching a plaque to a house in the Park where she lived as a young woman. Watch this space.

As ever, thanks to you, our loyal members, for your continuing support which helps us to grow and spread the word about our region's wonderful women.

PS: have you seen the *Maid Marian* figure at the junction of Derby Road and Upper Parliament Street? It's good to have a statue of a woman, even if she's not real!

Sian Trafford

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 17th October – NWHG AGM followed by Miriam Jackson's talk on Nan Green, Spanish Civil War volunteer & peace activist.

Thursday 22nd October – Reopening event at Manuscripts & Special Collections, King's Meadow Campus. 5 – 7pm.

Saturday 23rd January 2027: Nottingham Women's History Group talk *More Nottingham Women Artists*, by Sian Trafford.

1st to 6th March 2027: *Lilies on the Land*, play by The Lions Apart about 4 women who join the Women's Land Army in WWII. Leicester Little Theatre, Dover Street, LE1 6PW.
<https://thelittletheatre.co.uk/whats-on/lilies-on-the-land/#book-online>

Save the Date: Saturday 24th April 2027. Talk (to be confirmed) for Nottingham Women's History Group.

Save the Date: Saturday 10th July 2027. Talk (to be confirmed) for Nottingham Women's History Group.

Unless otherwise specified, all Nottingham Women's History Group talks start 2 pm at International Community Centre, Mansfield Road, NG1 3FN. £5 donation.

Meet Our New Committee Members

Katharine Ramshaw



Katharine Ramshaw

Hello, I am Katharine a recent graduate from Nottingham Trent with a Masters in Fine Art. During my MFA, I researched the roles of working-class women in Newcastle (my home town!) and explored ideas of the matriarch, religion and community.

I have exhibited my work at Nottingham Contemporary, BACKLIT Gallery and Fishergate Point Studios.

I am so excited to be joining the committee for NWHG to help further research historically forgotten women and bring them to public attention.

Katharine

Jean Brennan

I was born in Manchester, moved to Kent as a child and I've lived in Nottingham for 40 years. I've long been interested in history and this has developed into a keen interest in local heritage.

I enjoy exploring Nottingham's streets, their buildings and public art, whilst also learning about the stories of the people who shaped

them. Getting involved with NWHG felt the natural follow on from all of this.

I'm proud to champion the NWHG's work in highlighting the achievements of women whose contributions in and around Nottingham have been overlooked. The group's research and storytelling help balance the historical record and ensure that the impact of women in the area is recognised and celebrated.

My working life has taken me from the Civil Service in London to a variety of posts at Nottingham Trent University and then into HR and training roles in local authorities and NHS Trusts and I am a Trustee of Nottingham Civic Society.

Jean

Manuscripts & Special Collections Event

I was delighted to learn that MSC are staying put! King's Meadow Campus, was put up for sale by the University of Nottingham however a leaseback has been negotiated with the new owners, and so MSC will be remaining at King's Meadow for several more years.

As part of the sale the reading room and offices have been relocated within King's Meadow, and there will be a celebratory reopening event on Thursday 22nd October, 5-7pm to which we are all invited.

The event will include a tour of the facilities including their digitisation and conservation studios and collections strongroom. There will also be a showcase of research projects based on the collections, displays from teaching and placement programmes and information about community and partnership working - including of course the work on the Feminist archive and special collection.

Miriam Jackson

News about two of our Notable Women

Marjorie Helen Arnfield MBE (née Milburn) 1930 - 2001 – Artist

I was thrilled to be contacted by Robin Arnfield Marjorie's son, back in May and to have his help in updating our information about his mother. Robin was rightly proud of his mother an artist and wanted to make sure that she wasn't forgotten.

He has written her up on Wikipedia and sent us additional information about her life and work. I have amended her biography which can be found on our website and here <https://nottinghamwomenshistory.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Marjorie-Arnfield.pdf>

I was also able to put Robin in touch with Jo Taylor, the son of Dorothie Spence Field, another artist who was a friend of Marjorie's and they enjoyed a chat about their mothers.

Rose Fyleman 1877 – 1957 Singer and children's writer

A Crowdfunder appeal was launched on 1st July with the aim to raise sufficient money to make and install a plaque at 7 Cavendish Crescent South in The Park; Rose's home for a few years when a child. We were contacted by the property's owner who is happy to support a plaque being installed there.

The appeal ended in late September and we have now commissioned the plaque and will keep you updated on FB and by mail outs with details on when the plaque will be unveiled.

This is another in our **Plaque Attack** initiative as we try to ensure that various women who have lived and worked in Nottingham are not forgotten and their achievements are noted.
Miriam Jackson

Two Notts Women At War

In Issue 19 we described our visit to International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln and their fantastic display of silhouette statues commemorating ten women who served during WW2. Since then, we have received the stories of two women from Nottinghamshire who had notable wartime experiences.

Sonia Straw was born in Lowdham and grew up in a house on Ton Lane. When war broke out, however, she was living in Caterham, Surrey, working as a secretary and serving as an ARP Warden part time. It was her work in this role that led to her being one of the first three women to be awarded the George Medal.



Sonia Straw in her ARP uniform.
Image courtesy of Janet Straw.

On Sunday 1 September 1940 Caterham was bombed, possibly as part of an attack on nearby RAF Kenley. Sonia, who was 19, exhibited tremendous courage, single handedly treating badly injured women and

children for shrapnel and bomb-shock and keeping everyone calm. She worked from the afternoon until 2.30am, according to the *Daily Express*, 2 October 1940.

Later during the night an alarm was raised about an elderly woman who was missing from one of the streets hit by the bombs. Sonia volunteered to search for her, walking into the street through falling masonry, despite there being a time bomb there. Sonia entered the collapsing home of the woman, whom she finally found under a bed.

Her courage and steely nerves were all the more remarkable given that Sonia had not finished her air raid warden's training at the time and had only received two lectures on first aid.

Our thanks go to Janet Straw for sharing Sonia's story with us.

Patricia Dale moved with her family to Newark-on-Trent on 6 February 1941 just a few weeks' short of her 17th birthday. Patricia found a job in the Progress Office at Ransome & Marles, makers of ball and roller bearings. These were essential for engines such as the famous Rolls Royce Merlin which powered several aircraft of the day.

This would have counted as 'war work' so Pat would not have been required to enlist for the Land Army or any of the other employments that unmarried women were expected to do towards the war effort. Pat's elder sister, Sylvia, also worked in their factory, on a two weeks' days, two weeks' nights shift system.

We know from the testimony of Marjorie, one of Pat's most longstanding friends & a fellow Progress Office employee that both these young women were at work on Friday 7 March 1941 when Newark experienced its only air raid. This daylight raid on Marles' factory took place at 1.25pm – it left 41 employees dead (the youngest 18 years and the oldest 68 years) and over 150 injured. Luckily, it happened when Sylvia was on 'nights' while Pat and Marjorie most likely escaped because they worked in the offices

rather than the factory. They still had to be evacuated while the fire was fought.

Their father, John Dale, also had a lucky escape. He was meant to be collecting figures for the railway company from the company weighbridge but the man he needed to see wasn't there. Instead of sitting in the office to wait for him, John went home for his dinner – and the weighbridge office received one of the raid's direct 'hits'.

At some point, the company held a competition among the work force to identify different aircraft, both 'ours' and enemy, simply by silhouette. Only one person successfully identified all silhouettes correctly – that was Pat Dale. However, she wasn't given the prize (whatever that was) – after all, you couldn't have all those male entrants being beaten by a mere girl, could you? The prize went to the man who came second.

The unfairness of this rankled with Pat for much of her life, perhaps not surprisingly. As a footnote to Pat's war time contribution, R&M had a company orchestra, as so many large employers did at that time, to which Pat belonged. At least twice, possibly three times, they played on national radio's mid-morning programme "*Workers' Playtime*".

Jenni Dobson – thank you for sharing Pat's story with us, Jenni.



Pat Dale in her band uniform.
Image courtesy of Jenni Dobson.

My Florence Boot “Odyssey”

If any of you have heard my talk about Florence Boot's life in Nottingham and Jersey, you will know that I'm rather besotted with her, which is why I decided to follow an Odyssey of my own, albeit encompassing only one island (Jersey) and meeting absolutely no monsters at all. I did, however, do it by boat!

In early July, armed with my list of Florence Boot locations, we travelled to Jersey by boat from Portsmouth. The first day I sought out a plaque Stuart Nicolle of Jersey Heritage had told me about. It is in the pavement in front of her early home on Halkett Place, just down the road from Grove Street Methodist Church where she worshipped. After that, we went to the Museum and tourist information point where, I was disappointed (and incensed) to learn, there is no Florence Boot trail — although you can book on to a Bergerac one. I should have offered to compile one.

The next day we set off to find Villa Millbrook, Florence and Jesse's retirement home; St. Matthew's, the 'Glass Church'; Coronation Park; and Florence and Jesse's graves at St. Brelade's Bay. We found the lot thanks to very friendly and helpful locals who were very knowledgeable and happy to point us in the right direction.

Villa Millbrook is now Millbrook Manor and looks extremely well kept. The owners had kindly left the gates open so we could have a good look, which I did, trying to imagine Florence coming and going.



Millbrook Manor, image courtesy of Sian Trafford.

Florence donated the Villa's garden to create Coronation Park. Unfortunately, after all the hot weather, the grass was brown and crispy, plus there was a sea fret coming in so it was very misty with low, swirling clouds, but it is still a beautiful, extensive park and nowadays has a wonderful water play park which was being well used by local children.

St. Matthew's was as stunning as I hoped it would be. Externally, it is a very modest little church. Florence planned it with Rene Lalique as a tribute to Jesse after his death and I was so thrilled to see the glass screens, railings and font in the flesh for myself.



The glass screen and font at St. Matthew's Church. Image courtesy of Sian Trafford.

After that, we set off to find their graves in St. Brelade's Bay. St. Matthew's doesn't have a graveyard, and it had not been renovated at the time of Jesse's death. The graves were the trickiest to find because they are in a secluded woodland but we persevered. There is a signpost, but it only mentions Jesse Boot's grave – grrr. And then, when you do find it, it is in a really awkward position on a precipitous slope but I was so pleased we had been so determined.

On the final day we sought out the Florence Boot cottages and the FB Playing Fields. The cottages were built in 1923 to be rented by tradesmen with families of at least 5 children, and the area has now been developed into a small housing estate, still called the Florence Boot Cottages. The playing fields were

established in 1928 and named not only for Florence but also in honour of the Lieutenant Governor of the time, Sir Francis Bingham, whose suggestion and motivation it was to use the land as playing fields. They are truly extensive and are still well used today.

I found it thrilling to see all the locations I have been talking about for several years, and I just loved seeing that Florence's name is still acknowledged in the island. It was particularly wonderful for me to see that her legacy is a living, thriving thing enjoyed daily by the population she and Jesse cared so much about.

Sian Trafford

Missing, Overlooked and Disappearing: Women's Public Art in Nottinghamshire

Fourteen works of public art by women in Nottinghamshire have been added to the 'Wikipedia' page, ['List of public art in Nottinghamshire'](#).

Members of the [Nottingham Women's History Group](#) (NWHG) have been working to increase awareness of women's public art in Nottinghamshire and its acknowledgement on Wikipedia. This now stands at a third of the total entries: 19 by women artists and 35 by men artists, with 3 unknown. Still not parity with men's public art, alas, but perhaps you can add some others to the list.

This work of visiting, photographing and recording is how we can restore women's legacy. Women's work is overlooked and missed when we are not monitoring what is being published and removed. For example, previously only five known women's pieces existed upon the list of 43 acknowledgements of public art in Nottingham ('Wikipedia'), i.e., women's art did not contribute even 12 percent of those entries. We easily discovered another 14 unacknowledged

artworks by women and added those to the list. Such information about the reality of public artwork by women and men in Nottinghamshire will guide people to visit more of these beautiful artefacts.

Of more concern is disappearing artwork by women. In this case a piece by the sculptor, Hilary Cartmel, 'Chorus Line'; the one with the signposts to two Nottingham theatres. We did not know of its fate after removal from Maid Marian Way; was it destroyed or in storage? Sadly, after contact by NWHG and articles in the *West Bridgford Wire* and *Nottingham Post* (August 24, 2026), the admission by Nottingham City Council was this public art had been destroyed. This is heritage and dare we point out was erected with public money for public admiration.

We have also been informed that the old NCP car park underpass at the bottom end of Maid Marian Way, will be demolished. This is the current site of the artwork, 'Traffic Flow', also by Hilary Cartmel. Therefore, the preservation of this art work is also at risk and once again NWHG is following up to save that art work for the public. We have good news! Intervention has confirmed plans to preserve 'Traffic Flow'.



Traffic Flow by Hilary Cartmel.
Image courtesy of Linzi Kemp.

Furthermore, we are also chasing up whether another work by Hilary Cartmel, 'Healing Energy', is still in place at the Queen's Medical Centre — please send us a photograph if you have seen it recently.

Linzi Kemp

NWHG - the early years!

Linzi Kemp has been delving into the history of NWHG. Here is a summary of her findings:

Origins as Nottinghamshire Women's History Group

Celebrating Nottinghamshire Women's History was an original group begun in the 1980s (to 1999) involving Derrica Hodgson, Jennie Swindells, Suella Postles (Curator Brewhouse Yard Museum, Nottingham) and Wendy Whitfield/Pavlidis. This originating group met at the old Waterworks offices, Brewhouse Yard Museum; offered monthly speakers and held exhibitions: one at the Archives Building on High Pavement, Nottingham and one in Brewhouse Yard, Nottingham. Talks/Walks about women's history were started and these were popular; the first attracted about 100 people.

Nottingham Women's History Group - NWHG

The Nottingham Women's History Group (NWHG) was co-founded by Mo Cooper and Val Wood who ran a free 'taster' walk to celebrate International Women's Day (March, 2009), which attracted over 50 women. A press release, entitled 'Rediscovering the women of Nottingham' introduced the next two-hour evening walk, beginning at the gates to Nottingham Castle and ending at The Royal Centre (16th July 2009). Mo Cooper commented, "we thought we'd give more people the opportunity to spend a pleasant evening walking around the city, learning about the famous, and not so famous, daughters of Nottingham".

An initial meeting was set, 30 January 2010, and a constitution adopted (organised by Ruth Greenberg) for NWHG to be a small charity, with committee members: Flo Shakespeare (treasurer), Andrea Barker and Pat Firman joining Mo Cooper and Val Wood. Rowena Edlin-White also joined the committee that year.

The group pledged to:

- Celebrate, promote and research the contribution of women to Nottingham's history
- Promote the rich sources of women's history in Nottingham
- Research the lives of women and encourage others to do so
- Promote interest in the women who have shaped the history of Nottingham
- Ensure that women's history was visible to the people of Nottingham
- Make the links between women's history and other 'invisible' groups and other communities

The agreed aims remain to this day. At that time, and currently, there is no membership fee, only a nominal charge levied for attendance at events.

In 2010, a grant application was made to 'One Nottingham' via the Nottingham Women's Centre that supported:

1. Two walks per year and a publicity pamphlet. Two walks followed – one in July 2010 and another in March 2011; these events were publicised in a pamphlet distributed to venues such as libraries and the Nottingham Women's Centre.
2. Three talks annually on women's history with guest speakers. One of the first events was held 8 May, 2010 when Sheila Rowbotham spoke about 'Working Class women and their role in developing ideas for change'. Over 50 people signed an attendance sheet, although many more actually attended. At that talk, there was a display of historic radical magazines and a raffle for a signed copy of Rowbotham's book, '*A Century of Women*'.
3. Two talks to outside groups (history societies/women's groups). Talks were given to the National Trust - Nottingham Branch, Nottingham Friendship Society and Mansfield Marions Women's Institute.
4. An exhibition on women's history at a key Nottingham venue.

5. A website. 2012/2013 saw the NWHG website launched. A logo and banner were designed.
6. Media coverage to publicise the group.
7. Links with other relevant groups and ensuring access for all.

In the period 2011 – 2020 NWHG has continued to work to promote, celebrate and research women's contribution to Nottingham's history. The group's first annual general meeting took place at the International Community Centre (ICC), Nottingham on 22 January 2011; and the ICC has continued to provide the venue for NWHG talks.

The group has successfully collaborated on various projects with institutions such as University of Nottingham, Galleries of Justice, Nottinghamshire Heritage Gateway, The National Trust and Gedling Council.

We have produced a number of publications (listed below) and look forward to producing further books and pamphlets in due course.

NWHG's campaign to install blue plaques for Nottingham's notable women, our **Plaque Attack** initiative, is gathering momentum; and our research continues to contribute to the understanding of Nottingham's history and the role played by women in shaping our city.

This is a summary of a detailed piece for Wikipedia. The link will be posted on our website and Facebook page in due course.

Publications

Women of Nottingham - a walk around the city centre (2010).

Nottingham Women in WW1 (2015).

No Surrender! Women's Suffrage in Nottinghamshire (February 2016). Expanded and reprinted in 2018.

A Tribute to Life, Helena(Nellie)Dowson – suffragist. (Spring 2020).

Nottingham Herstory: 50 Remarkable Women (2024), soon to be reprinted.

Helen Kirkpatrick Watts – suffragette,
Rowena Edlin-White, (2016)

Linzi Kemp

For more information and updates about Nottingham Women's History Group you can contact us:

Website:

www.nottinghamwomenshistory.org.uk

Email:

nottmwomenshistory@gmail.com

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/NottinghamWomensHistoryGroup/>

Twitter: @NottsWomensHist

NWHG makes all reasonable effort to trace owners of the images included in the newsletter. If anyone has an objection, please contact us. We will give full accreditation as requested or remove the image.

Key to cover images from top left:

- Suffragette banner, courtesy of Siân Trafford
- NWHG banner, courtesy of Siân Trafford
- Plaque & juniper tree in the Arboretum commemorating Helen Kirkpatrick Watts, courtesy of Siân Trafford
- Caroline Dexter, Bloomerite and journalist, courtesy of Rowena Edlin-White
- Florence Paton sculpture by Hilary Cartmel, Rest Garden, Carlton Hill, courtesy of Siân Trafford
- Eileen White opening for Midlands v Australia, Trent Bridge 1951, courtesy of Rowena Edlin-White
- Plaque commemorating Women Magistrates, courtesy of Siân Trafford
- Plaque commemorating Helena Brownsword Dowson, courtesy of Siân Trafford